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MISOGYNOIR: UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCES BY BLACK WOMEN

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Counselor Education

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Briettney Curtner

May 2021

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

MISOGYNOIR: UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCES BY BLACK WOMEN

by

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SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2021

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ABSTRACT

MISOGYNOIR: UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCES BY BLACK WOMEN

by Briettmy Curtner

The Black female voice whispers within literature because of the limited focus on their lived experiences, specifically of undergraduate Black women. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how Black women in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree navigate racism and sexism. Additionally, this study explored participant resonance with the characteristics and perceived conflicts of the Strong Black Women (SBW) schema. Six Black women from a comprehensive public university in the West participated in a qualitative interview and member checking. The following are emergent themes found as a result of this study: oppositional framing, navigation of intergroup comparisons, inferiority in the classrooms, realities of the SBW schema, and gratitude for this study. The outcomes of this study contribute to the dearth of research about undergraduate experiences of Black women. Taken together, implications for institutional practices to ensure inclusive learning environments and suggestions for further research conclude the study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For 20 years, I unknowingly identified with a racial identity that was not fully representative of me. All the knowledge I had emanated from my parents, I am Filipino and White. I am multiracial. Now, this is still true. However, after many genealogical tests, I learned of my true racial identity, thus beginning my journey of authenticity. I am about 50.4% Filipino, 34.9% Nigerian, and 13.9% White. This journey continues but it began with an existential crisis that has led to clarity. The percentages were not as important as it was finally understanding the curliness of my hair, the brown tone of my skin, and the figure of my body.

It was not until I began scheduling and conducting interviews that I realized the importance of this research was greater than being what I needed to do to graduate. When scheduling interviews, many participants would express doubt about the value of their lived experiences. It was in those moments when I became less troubled by the stressors of completing this thesis and more focused on providing participants a safe space to be heard, some for the first time and all during a needed time. This year has been tumultuous due to a global pandemic, protests of lethal police violence, and a presidential election threatening democracy within the United States with racist rhetoric.

Background

As Black girls develop into Black women, the characteristic of strength develops due largely to the many challenges that arise while existing in a society in which Blacks and women are devalued (hooks, 1981; Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996). Regardless, Black women continue to strive for excellence in many disciplines, such as academia and

politics, although while doing so racism and sexism are too often encountered (hooks, 1981). Moreover, the zeitgeist of society is not post-racial or color-blind. Tatum (2017) suggests instead that it is color-silent because of the learned behavior to avoid talking about racial differences. This strengthens the need for Black feminism because of the platform it has produced for the voices of Black women to be heard.

In 1977, the Combahee River Collective published a statement that provides insight into the evolution of Black feminism, which includes the collective's political views, problems faced when organizing Black feminists, and specific issues of focus (Combahee River Collective, 1995). Additionally, this collective of Black feminists describe their view of Black feminism as the "logical and political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face" (Combahee River Collective, 1995, p. 232). Almost 50 years later, much of the statement is still relevant (Cooper, 2018).

Problem Statement

By Fall 2018, 2.1 million Black men and women were enrolled in higher education in pursuit of their baccalaureate degree, a 40% increase since 2000 (Hussar et al., 2020). For the past two decades, Black women have enrolled in postsecondary institutions at a higher rate in comparison to Black men (Hussar et al., 2020; Hussar & Bailey, 2011). This growing population often attends college with a conceptualization or lived experience of systemic racism (Dulin-Keita et al., 2011), such as disciplinary discrimination in schools (Bowman et al., 2018) and racial bias in school curriculum (Feagin & Barnett, 2004). Nonetheless, undergraduate Black women often experience

sexism in addition to the aforementioned and literature of this intersection is limited (Lewis et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2011; West et al., 2016).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to provide further research on the impact of racism and sexism on Black and African American women pursuing a baccalaureate degree. To gain a better understanding, six participants who self-identified with Black or African American ancestry and cisgender female gender expression were interviewed to learn about their collegiate experience thus far. These eligibility requirements led to a participant pool able to share experiences directly related to the focus of this study.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How has racism affected Black and African American women in their collegiate experience?
2. How has sexism affected Black and African American women in their collegiate experience?
3. Are the lived experiences of Black or African American women congruent with the Strong Black Woman schema?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of facilitating the present research, this study used the following definitions:

African American. “A person of African ancestral origins who self-identifies or is identified by others as African American” (Agyeman et al., 2005, p.1016) by association with the United States of America.

Black. A person with African ancestral origins (Agyeman et al., 2005). This term will be used inclusively to also represent African Americans throughout this study.

Black feminism. It is the “logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face” (Combahee River Collective, 1995, p. 232) such as racial, sexual, and class oppression.

Black placemaking. “The ways that urban Black Americans create sites of endurance, belonging, and resistance through social interaction” (Hunter et al., 2016, p. 31).

Member-checking. It is the process of providing “participants...transcripts or particles from the narratives they contributed during interview sessions...to verify their accuracy” (Carlson, 2010, p. 1105).

Misogynoir. A term coined by Moya Bailey and proliferated by Trudy to describe “the anti-Black racist misogyny that Black women experience” (Bailey & Trudy, 2018, p. 762; Trudy, 2020).

Misogyny. “It is derived from the Ancient Greek word ‘mīsoguníā’ which means hatred towards women” (Srivastava et al., 2017, p. 111). It can take shape in many forms, such as gender discrimination, sexual objectification, sexual harassment, belittling of women, and violence against women (Srivastava et al., 2017).

Racial awakening. It is the “experience that triggered personal exploration of one’s heritage and the histories of one’s racialized ethnic group or other Black groups” (Neville & Cross, 2017, p. 104).

Racial consciousness. It is the “awareness of one’s ethnicity and/or race...and knowledge of social systems that create and perpetuate power differentials between groups” (Aldana et al., 2012, p. 121).

Sexism. It is the “unequal and unfair treatment of women relative to men” (Swim et al., 2004, p. 117).

Sociopolitical development. It is “the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties, and the capacity for action in political and social systems necessary to interpret and resist oppression (Watts et al., 2003, p. 185).

Systemic racism. It is the “racialized exploitation and subordination of Americans of color by White Americans that encompasses the racial stereotyping, prejudices, and emotions of Whites, as well as the discriminatory practices and racialized institutions generated for the long-term domination of African Americans and other people of color” (Feagin & Barnett, 2004, p. 1100).

Assumptions

In order to conduct this research, this study assumed the following:

1. All participants will be able to recall experiences related to living within an intersection of race and gender, specifically as Black and female.
2. All participants have experienced racism and sexism.

Significance

More recently, the topic of intersectionality and lived experiences with misogynoir has grown, expanding the presence of undergraduate Black women voices in higher education literature, but it remains limited. This study seeks to add to that literature through an increased understanding of the impact of racism and sexism on undergraduate Black women. By doing so, institutions can apply such information to provide training and resources for use by staff and faculty to effectively support undergraduate Black women in and outside the classroom. Further, this study is intended to investigate whether and how undergraduate Black women resonate with the Strong Black Women schema in service of its validity.

The following literature review will delve into the presence of Black students in the American educational system, racial consciousness, and how Black women have and continue to navigate misogynoir. As colleges and universities move towards an anti-racist pedagogy, there needs to be an understanding that diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts must be practiced and exist beyond mission and value statements (Ash et al., 2020). Ideally, within higher education, this will occur with a diverse representation of faculty, staff, administrators, and students at decision-making tables.

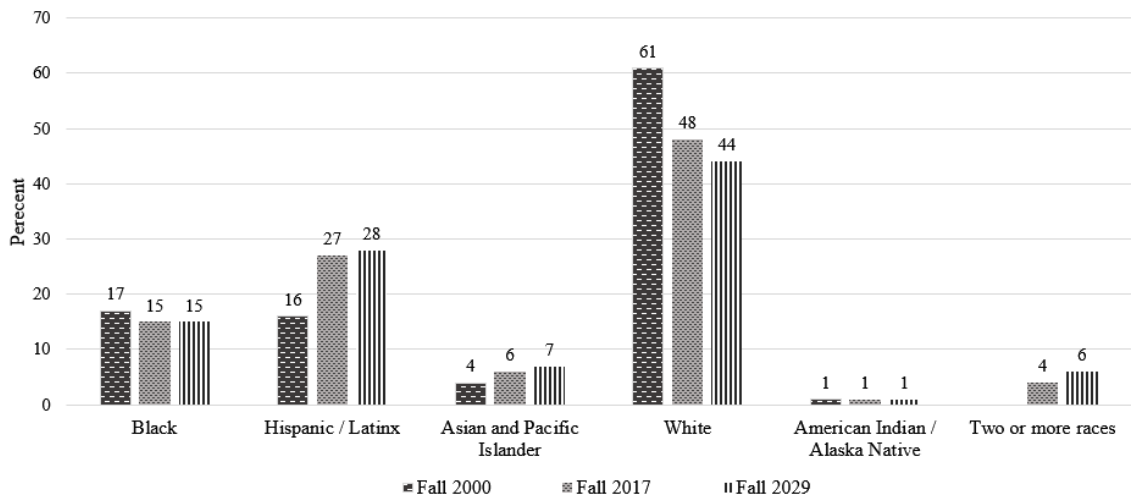
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Data Footprint: America and Education

Black students are a minority population within the American educational system; however, enrollment into public schools and postsecondary institutions continues to decrease. Nationally, between Fall 2000 and Fall 2017, the percentage of Black students enrolled in K-12 dropped from 17% to 15% while the percentage of White students more than doubled to 48% (see Figure 1) (Hussar et al., 2020). Further, projections to 2029 claim no significant increase or decrease in Black students' enrollment into K-12 schools (Hussar & Bailey, 2011). Similarly, from 1999 to 2018, the demographics of K-12 teachers identifying as Black have only changed slightly from 8% to 7% (Hussar et al., 2020). From this, it can be inferred that Black students are in classrooms without much representation of themselves in peers and teachers (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Percentage Distribution of Students Enrolled in K-12 by Race/Ethnicity



Note. The data presented was adopted from The Condition of Education Report 2020 which included projections for Fall 2029 (Hussar et al., 2020).

When learning about living conditions and access to education in K-12, the data tell a story of many Black children living in poverty and single-parent households. For instance, in 2018 the national poverty rate among children was 18% (Kids Count, 2020). In the same year, Black children in K-12 grades were living at a higher rate of poverty at 32%, whereas the rate for White children was 10% (Hussar et al., 2020). Moreover, the same definition used by the United States Census is being used here, “if a family’s total income is less than the family’s threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019, paras 1). Nonetheless, the percentage of students who attended high-poverty schools, where 75% or more of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, was highest for Black students at 45% (Hussar et al., 2020; Bowman et al., 2018). During the 2018-2019 academic year, “55% of Black children lived in mother-only households, compared with 34% who lived in married-couple households, and 8% who lived in father-only households” (Hussar et al., 2020, p. 4). Further, Bowman et al. (2018) describe Black students’ living conditions and the burden of poverty. For parents, living in poverty tends to drain the social and emotional energy needed to respond appropriately to typical childhood behavior, such as aggression (Bowman et al., 2018). For Black students, Bowman et al. (2018) emphasize that an upbringing plagued with poverty and inconsistent care can affect their developmental potential.

By Fall 2018, despite such hardships, 2.1 million Black students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree, a 40% increase since 2000 (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2020). Between 2000 and 2018, undergraduate

enrollment increased by 26%, from 13.2 million to 16.6 million students (Hussar et al., 2020; Hussar & Bailey, 2011). While access to higher education has increased, the lack of racial representation among students, faculty, and staff in colleges and universities persists (Allen, 1992; Hussar et al., 2020). In comparison to other racial groups, more White students immediately attend college following the completion of high school, at 42% in 2018 (Hussar et al., 2020; Merolla, 2018). Between 2010 to 2018, Hussar et al. (2020) claim minor fluctuations of the immediate college enrollment rate of 37% for Black students but no measurable significance.

For almost a decade, undergraduate enrollment of Black women has consistently occurred at a higher rate than Black male students (Harper & Davis, 2012; Young, 2020). When comparing White and Black female college enrollments of 18- to 24-year-olds, White women are prominent. In 2000, White women represented almost half of the 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college at 41% while 35% were Black (Hussar et al., 2020). This gap still existed in 2018, but with Black female students representing 41% of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college and White female students leading at 45% (Hussar et al., 2020). However, the gender gap for 25- to 29-year-olds who enrolled and completed their undergraduate studies has widened by 4% since 2000, with women being dominant (Hussar et al., 2020; Hussar & Bailey, 2011). Nonetheless, from 2000 to 2019, the educational attainment rate for both male and female students pursuing a high school diploma, an associate's, a bachelor's, a master's, or higher degree has increased (Gould et al., 2019). In the same twenty years, White 25- to 29-year-olds have consistently held a

higher educational attainment rate than those of Black 25- to 29-year-olds (Hussar et al., 2020).

Racial Consciousness and Socialization

Adolescence

There is an assumption that adolescents are unable to understand “racial distinctions or deliberately utilize racial insensitive remarks” due to their young age (Dulin-Keita et al., 2011, p. 662). Some studies have implemented the use of dolls, representative of different racial and ethnic groups, to investigate this assumption (Connolly, 2002; Fishbein, 2002; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Between the ages of four and six years old, White children can identify themselves among the dolls; however, Black children were unable to choose dolls of their own racial identity until seven years old (Fishbein, 2002). It is important to highlight that this delay in doll identification may not merely reflect a child’s racial awareness (Dulin-Keita et al., 2011). By six years old, Black children develop a pro-White bias and during their adolescence a pro-Black group membership forms as well as negative attitudes towards White people (Fishbein, 2002; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Thus, children are equipped with an understanding of their racial identity and may engage in discriminatory behaviors. In their longitudinal study examining lived experiences of racism during adolescence, Brody et al. (2006) report that 92% of Black children under the age of 11 had experienced some form of racial discrimination. Thus, it can be inferred that Black children are not aware of their own racial identity at the same age as White children instead Black children learn the value of Whiteness first (Dulin-Keita et al., 2011; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990).

Moreover, Black parents will tailor their racial and ethnic socialization to the matters they believe their children must know to be successful, such as racial pride and barriers in the classroom (Brown et al., 2009). The parents' ability to engage with their children in racial and ethnic socialization is one of the prominent factors related to Black youth's performance in school (Brown et al., 2009). Brown and Krishnakumar (2007) explain racial socialization to refer to the explicit and implicit communication regarding intergroup protocol, whereas ethnic socialization discusses intragroup protocol. White-Johnson et al. (2010) bring attention to how parents often send these messages in combination, intentionally or unintentionally, and complementary or contradictory. White-Johnson et al. (2010) write:

For instance, a mother who transmits messages about obstacles the child is likely to face because of their race without also transmitting messages that instill pride in the child's race is likely to convey a radically different overall message about the nature of the world to her child than a mother who transmits both racial pride and racial barrier messages (p. 237).

All this considered, parents must strive to transmit messages that achieve racial pride and prepare their child for a world operating with structural racism.

Emerging Adulthood

Arnett (2014) defines *emerging adulthood* as a generational label to describe an added life stage, beginning at age 18 and lasting until the late twenties. The age range used to describe emerging adulthood expands over a decade as Arnett (2000) notes that certain commitments that add structure to adulthood may not occur until their late twenties; some examples are marriage, parenting, and long-term employment. Nonetheless, this life stage can be met with many conflicting emotions as individuals

navigate the excitement and uneasiness of becoming an adult (Arnett, 2014; Chung et al., 2014). Arnett (2014) further defines this life stage with four distinguishing features: identity exploration, instability, feeling in-between, and open possibilities. Moving forward, these features will be used as a lens to describe how Black emerging adults develop a racial consciousness.

Guided by Nigrescence theory (see Figure 2), Neville and Cross (2017) interviewed 64 self-identified Black adults, 30 men and 34 women, to address the gaps of literature specific to racial awakening. Their racial awakenings were characterized by lived experiences and observations of how racism persists in everyday life, such as obtaining a formal education which led to a curiosity to learn more and becoming politically active (Neville & Cross, 2017). The truth is a vast majority of Black emerging adults (BEA's) will experience a form of racial discrimination (Estrada-Martinez et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2020). More specifically, bias towards Black men results in eliciting fear and hostility from other racial groups and Black women being subjected to mockery and sexual allure (Celious & Oyserman, 2001). Further, literature has brought to attention the institutional racism which BEAs are developing within, such as police brutality and residential segregation (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Feagin, 2006; Hope et al., 2015). Consequently, the impact is taxing on the emerging adult.

Hope et al. (2015) describe the physiological, psychological, and sociopolitical repercussions. The physiological toll can predispose Black emerging adults to health issues, such as cardiovascular diseases, cellular aging, and an overall shorter life expectancy in comparison to Whites (Hope et al., 2015; Jee-Lyn García & Sharif, 2015).

Next, the strain on BEA's mental health can lead to the development of symptoms related to depression and anxiety and maladaptive coping strategies, such as low energy levels, constant worry, and substance abuse (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hope et al., 2015). Lastly, BEA's sociopolitical development can be altered by experiences of racial discrimination (Hope et al., 2015). This is because "contemporary experiences...reinforce historical racial exclusion that further alienates [BEAs] from traditional sociopolitical processes" (Hope et al., 2015, p. 346).

Undergraduate Black Women: Sense of Belonging

Undergraduate Black women (UBW) have described the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood as "moving from being a big fish in a little pond to being a little fish in a big pond" (Chung et al., 2014, p. 471). Identity literature references this phenomenon concerning a sense of belonging to a racial group but for college students, it is also about belonging to their attending institution (Booker, 2016; Stets & Burke, 2000; Thelamour et al., 2019). Generally, a *sense of belonging* is defined as "a feeling of relatedness or connection to others" (Booker, 2016, p. 218). However, specific to the college student experience, *school belonging* refers to a "sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activities [on campus]" (Goodenow, 1993, p.25). When this is achieved, UBW experience positive impacts on their well-being, specifically self-esteem, academic performance, low levels of acculturative stress, and life satisfaction (Booker, 2016; Chung et al., 2014; Hunter et al., 2019; Yap et al., 2011). On the other hand, isolation, fatigue, and poor academic achievement are possible

outcomes when UBW identity exploration is met with microaggressions and race representation inquiries (Booker, 2016; Lewis et al., 2013).

In their study that examines UBW perceptions of their learning environments and ability to succeed at a predominately female and White institution, Booker (2016) explains how some faculty can miss the mark whereas others excel when establishing safe and inclusive spaces in their classrooms. For instance, participants shared examples of faculty engaging with them in spokesperson pressure. All wanted to maintain their individuality, however, did not feel that was possible when being viewed as the representative of their race (Booker, 2016; Steele & Aronson, 1995). On the other hand, faculty who encouraged a sense of belonging for their UBW did so through their teaching styles and presence. Booker (2016) notes that when faculty are genuinely enthusiastic about their subject matter and incorporate real-world examples the relevancy helped students feel safe to express themselves, thus supporting their sense of belonging.

Further, in their study that examines Black undergraduate students sense of belonging to the racial group at a predominantly White institution in the Midwest, Hunter et al. (2019) found that many participants expressed notions of needing to “sacrifice some of who they perceive themselves to be as Black persons” (p. 961). This acculturative loss, for some, was only temporary and viewed as an inevitable experience to achieve long-term goals (Hunter et al., 2019). Furthermore, features of emerging adulthood were prevalent as participants shared about their peer interactions. The open possibilities of involvement mixed with feelings of in-between racial groups impacted student’s

motivation to socialize (Arnett, 2014; Hunter et al., 2019). All in all, UBW are navigating their institution to prepare for a career and themselves as emerging adults.

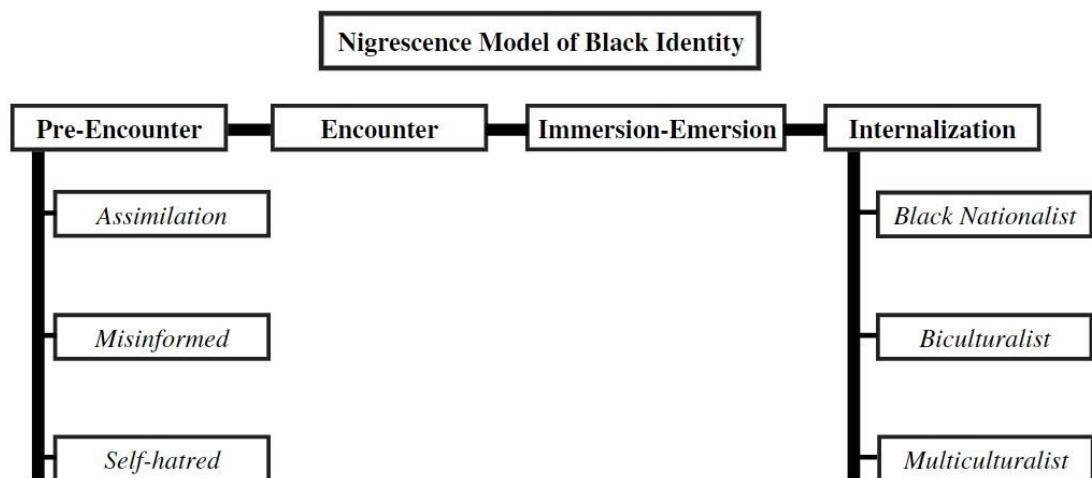
Black Racial Identity Development and Socialization

Nigrescence Model of Black Identity

The Nigrescence Identity Model (NIM) has “played a major role in the conceptualization of African American’s racial identity for the last three decades” (Worrell et al., 2001, p. 201). NIM has taken on different forms due to revisions focused on two broad areas. First, the influence of group and personal identity on self-esteem (Plummer, 1996; Vandiver et al., 2001). Second, the number of stages and outcomes of each stage (Vandiver et al., 2001). Vandiver et al. (2001) note the most recent NIM model provides eight characterizations of the Black racial identity with three in pre-encounter, two in immersion-emersion, and three in internalization (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Schematic Representation of the Expanded Model of Nigrescence Model



The first stage of four is *pre-encounter* with three possible identities, assimilation, misinformation, or self-hatred (Hanna, 2018; Vandiver et al., 2001). When *assimilating*, the Black individual has a “pro-American reference group orientation and race is not salient to them” (Vandiver et al., 2001, p. 72). If *misinformed*, a Black individual will leave this stage with “a negative stereotypical mindset” (Vandiver et al., 2001, p. 72). For those with *self-hatred*, their perspective is to “view themselves negatively as a result of their race” (Vandiver et al., 2001, p. 73). Next, the *encounter* stage does not describe a resulting identity, rather a lived experience that challenges their understanding of self about their racial identity (Endale, 2018; Hanna, 2018; Plummer, 1996). The third stage, *immersion-emersion*, can result either positively or negatively. When positive, Vandiver et al. (2001) claim the Black individual will “overromanticize themselves into the Black experience” (p. 72). Although, when malicious Black individuals will embody an Anti-White identity “to the point of demonizing Whites and their culture” (Vandiver et al., 2001, p. 72). Lastly, the fourth stage of *internalization* can manifest in three different ways. The *nationalist* will aim all efforts towards empowering the Black community (Vandiver et al., 2001). The *biculturalist* will experience self-acceptance with an additional focus of self beyond race, such as “gender, nationality, and sexual orientation” (Vandiver et al., 2001, p. 72). Further, the *multiculturalist* will experience the same, but with an increased focus on “two or more salient cultural identities” (Vandiver et al., 2001, p. 72).

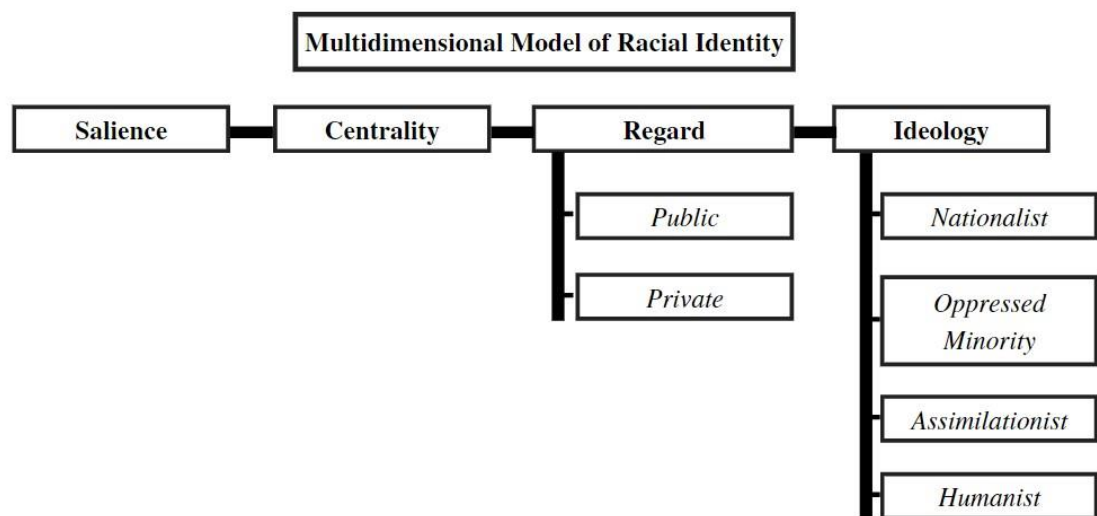
Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity

Until the development of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), Sellers et al. (1997) claim there were no models specific to Blacks to describe their racial identity that remained consistent with identity theory. That said, MMRI functions with an understanding that racial identity consists of “stable and situationally specific properties” (Sellers et al., 1997, p. 805). It is with these properties that MMRI seeks to understand the influence of racial identity on behavior in specific situations as well as across situations (Sellers et al., 1997). In short, the MMRI can be understood as an answer to the following questions, “How important is race in the individual’s perception of self?” and “What does it mean to be a member of this racial group?” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 23).

MMRI functions upon four assumptions, which guide the four dimensions that provide characteristics describing how an individual thinks and believes other group members should conduct themselves (see Figure 3) (Endale, 2018). The first assumption is that identities are influenced by situations but are also “stable properties of the person” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 23). Secondly, individuals comprise multiple identities that are ordered hierarchically based on definitions an individual provides for each (Endale, 2018; Sellers et al., 1998). Further, an individual’s perception of their racial identity is the most valid indicator of their understanding of being Black (Endale, 2018; Sellers et al., 1998). The last assumption pertains to MMRI measuring the importance and meaning of race for an individual in a particular moment because of not “[subscribing] to a linear progression of racial development” (Endale, 2018, p. 517).

Figure 3

Schematic Representation of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity



Moving forward, the four dimensions of MMRI work together to describe the Black experience of understanding self. To begin, a Black person in an all-White space may acknowledge that their racial identity was salient for them; however, the same situation may not have the same effect for another Black person (Sellers et al., 1998). This example explains *racial salience*, which refers to the “extent to which one’s race is a relevant part of one’s self-concept...in a particular situation” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 806). The next dimension is similar but different. The *centrality of identity* speaks to the extent a person defines themselves related to their race, but unlike salience, centrality is applicable across numerous situations (Sellers et al., 1998). Additionally, *racial regard* is

the third dimension and describes the “positive-negative valence” an individual feels towards race (Sellers et al., 1998). Racial regard is composed of two components: public and private regard. Public regard can be described as the individual’s critique of how the Black community is seen, valued, and appreciated by society (Endale, 2018; Sellers et al., 1998). In contrast, private regard describes the emotions of an individual’s view towards the Black community, positive or negative (Endale, 2018; Sellers et al., 1998).

Lastly, the fourth dimension of ideology presents four philosophies that claim different viewpoints of how Blacks should interact with society, concerning “political/economic development, cultural/social activities, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 27). First, a *nationalist* holds a political and economic stance and stresses Blacks’ independence within society (Endale, 2018). Second, the *oppressed minority* philosophy seeks collaboration with other minority groups to strengthen efforts towards the societal oppression both have experienced (Endale, 2018; Sellers et al., 1998). Next, an *assimilationist* seeks to acculturate within society to create change from within the Black community, however, without any de-emphasis of the importance of being Black (Endale, 2018; Sellers et al., 1998). Lastly, a *humanist* does not acknowledge others by their “race, gender, class, or other distinguishing characteristics” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 28). Endale (2018) describes the humanist color-blind approach with attention to viewing oppression as a “human phenomenon [focusing] on issues that affect all people, like the environment” (p. 519).

Social Identity Theory

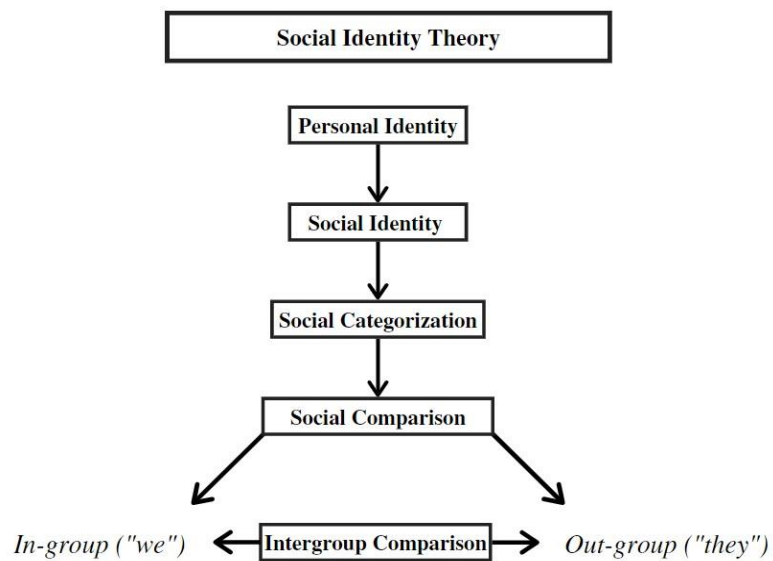
Henri Tajfel and John Turner collaborated to develop Social Identity Theory (SIT) which seeks to explain socialization using in-group and out-group memberships as the framework (see Figure 4) (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg et al., 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Groups can be labeled by social identifiers, such as race or gender but also by social categories, for example, a student's grade level. The group an individual subscribes to, relates with, and defines themselves by is considered an in-group (Hogg et al., 1995). However, all other groups are considered out-groups. More specifically, a Black girl attending their junior year of high school may view the Black community, other girls, and students in their junior year as part of their in-group. Yet, all who do not fit within such identities or categories would be considered as part of an out-group.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) describe three cognitive processes of SIT that occur as an individual assumes an in-group or out-group membership: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (see Figure 4). When categorizing, racism and sexism can be prevalent due to this process engaging in the sorting of people based on a variety of factors, such as skin color or perceived gender expression (Wolfe & Spencer, 1996). Once sorted, social identification will occur. During this time, an individual will become familiar with the behaviors, belief structures, and "nature of relations between their group and relevant out-groups" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 260). However, Hogg et al. (1995) argue such belief structures do not tend to be accurate because of their ideological nature but are nonetheless crucial to the stability, legitimacy, and mobility of a group. Lastly, social comparisons begin as a "we" and "they" perspective develop while groups

compete for superior positioning within the social hierarchy of groups (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Figure 4

Schematic Representation of Social Identity Theory



Self-esteem Hypothesis: Prejudice, Stereotype, and Discrimination

Many scholars propose that the rationale behind Social Identity Theory (SIT) is to enhance self-esteem, known as the self-esteem hypothesis (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg et al., 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wolfe & Spencer, 1996). By affiliating with an in-group and ostracizing out-groups, intergroup comparisons are made favoring the in-group (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, prejudices form, stereotypes are made, and discrimination will transpire between groups.

However, a counterargument is present in SIT literature of self-esteem being a byproduct of SIT rather than the motivation for identifying with an in-group (Brown, 2000; Hogg & Mullin, 1999). As the byproduct, self-esteem affirms a sense of belonging for the individual when navigating between in and out-groups (Brown, 2000). Regardless, SIT presents a context for the development of a group's derogatory perspective of others.

Working Through Misogynoir

Moya Bailey coined the term *misogynoir* to define the Black woman's experience with anti-Black racist misogyny, and she describes her reaction to its use as “excited and terrified” (Bailey & Trudy, 2018, p. 764). She expresses it was exciting to provide a name for this interaction and sadness by “the fact that misogynoir is so widespread that people have to talk about it so much” (Bailey & Trudy, 2018, p. 764). Misogynoir added a lens for Black feminists to continue to evaluate patriarchy, systemic racism, sexism, and other systems of oppression related to social identifiers, such as socioeconomic class and sexual orientation (Cooper, 2018).

Scholars suggest that the perspective of Black women as caretakers for White women, their children, and home remained the same during and following the abolishment of slavery; therefore, mitigating the recognition of their plight in the Women's Movement (Giddings, 1984; La Rue, 1970; Lerner, 1992). During the Women's Movement of the 1970s, Black women were not heard. The concerns being raised were primarily, if not only, of middle-class White women (Zamani, 2003). Similarly, during the Civil Rights Movement, Black women trailed behind White women and Black men in significance and value within society (Lerner, 1992). In response,

Black feminism, the “logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face” (Combahee River Collective, 1995, p. 232), formed and continues to exist by a collective group of Black women who built the platform for their voices to be heard, including but not limited to Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, bell hooks, Brittney Cooper, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Combahee River Collective, and Salsa Soul Sisters (Cooper, 2018; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1990; Harr & Kane, 2008; hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1989; Taylor, 2017; Walker, 1983). Now, the frameworks and language exist for Black women alike to speak on societal issues, such as racism and sexism, in spaces such as academia and politics (Schiller, 2000; Simien, 2006).

Strong Black Woman Schema

The Strong Black Woman (SBW) schema describes how Black women navigate the balancing act of portraying strength while concealing trauma (Abrams et al., 2019; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Black & Peacock, 2011; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombé, 2016). Abrams et al. (2019) provide the following definition:

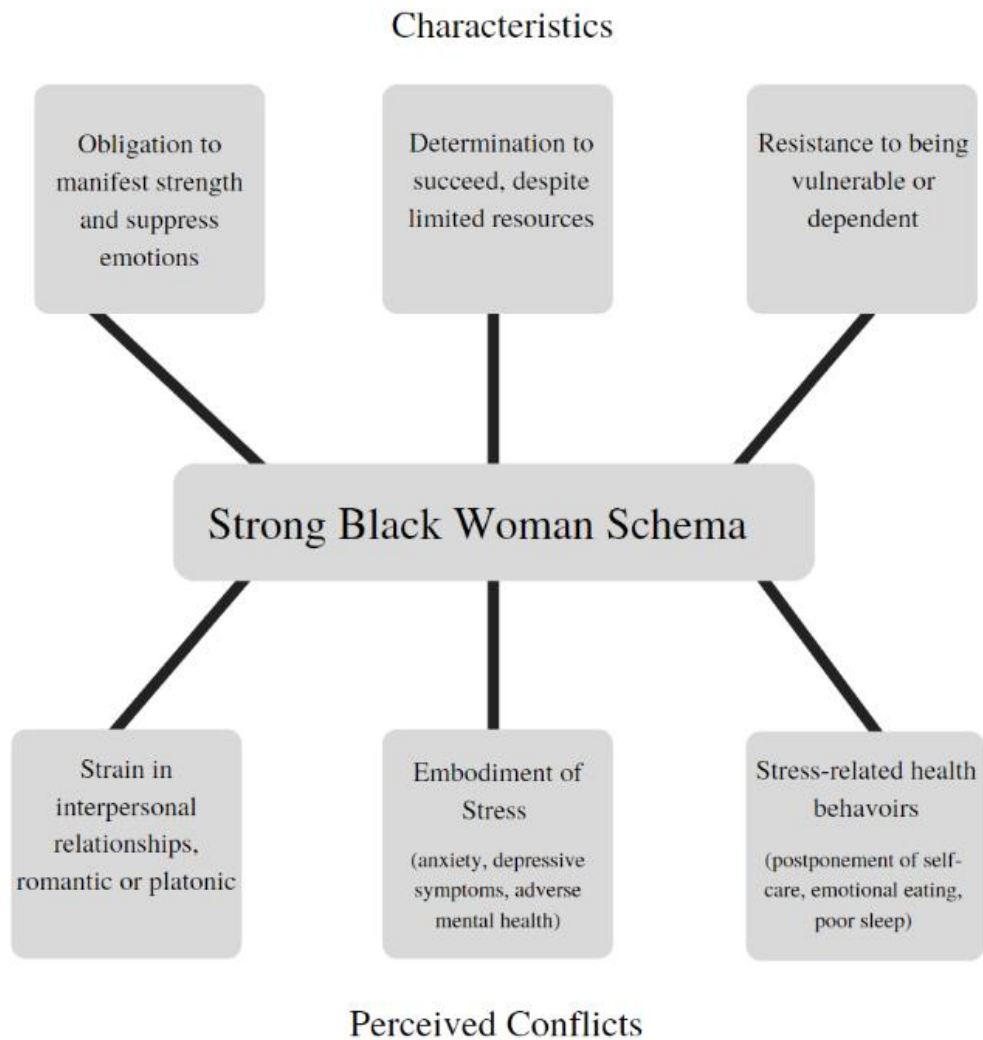
A SBW is a self-proclaimed warrior who exudes psychological hardiness and endurance despite adversity. As a result of her intersecting identities— as a woman, a Black person, and an individual who identifies as a SBW— a SBW independently assumes a multiplicity of responsibilities and roles, chief among them are provider and caretaker (p. 517).

For some, this schema serves as a coping mechanism; however, others have endorsed it as a source of strength (Abrams et al., 2019; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Thus, the characteristics and perceived conflicts of the SBW schema

(see Figure 5) must be interpreted keeping in mind the “double jeopardy of being African American and female” (Woods-Giscombé, 2010, p. 680).

Figure 5

Schematic Representation of the Characteristics and Perceived Conflicts of SBW Schema



In their study that examines perceptions of benefits and liabilities of SBW schema among 48 Black women, Woods-Giscombé (2010) found different lived experiences for the same SBW characteristic. For example, the determination to succeed despite limited resources was described as a means of survival for some and resilience for others (Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Woods-Giscombé (2010) explains that the preservation of self when navigating personal and professional relationships is how SBW schema functions as a coping mechanism, specifically to “maintain their self-worth and dignity” (p. 680). On the other hand, the same characteristic functions as a source of strength for those who were motivated “because there were other [Black women] who had gone through many more challenges than they were facing” (Woods-Giscombé, 2010, p. 679).

More recently, the definition of SBW has been challenged as scholars seek to understand the paradox of strength (Abrams et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2016; West et al., 2016; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Although SBW schema characteristics are seemingly positive—*independent, strong, and caretaking*—it is now understood that the cost of such a lifestyle can be a Black woman’s mental health (Donovan & West, 2015; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West et al., 2016). Moreover, it is with qualitative evidence that endorsement and internalization are viewed as the variables that vary the severity of such impact (Donovan & West, 2015; West et al., 2016).

West et al. (2016) describe the paradox:

If Black women overly identify with the SBW image, they may feel as if they have to live up to societal expectations of invincibility and indestructibility, even in the face of significant stress. Endeavoring to maintain a strong exterior may inadvertently exacerbate this stress and its effects in Black women’s lives (p. 394).

In their study that examines the relationships among SBW endorsement, stress, and depressive symptoms of 92 undergraduate Black women, Donovan and West (2015) findings encourage young Black women to be wary about embodying the SBW schema. This is because those who reported moderate to high SBW schema endorsement levels presented a “positive relationship between stress and depressive symptoms, whereas low levels of SBW endorsement did not” (Donovan & West, 2015, p. 392). Additionally, because of their study that examines perceptions of the SBW schema among 113 undergraduate Black women, West et al. (2016) recommend a new interpretation of strength. This is because all participants were familiar with the double-edged sword of the SBW schema dependent upon a Black woman’s level of internalization. West et al. (2016) advocate for strength to be revised as a “complex concept that is positive in many ways” as well as harmful because of its association with adverse mental health outcomes (p. 407). Altogether, the SBW schema describes a cultural ideal for some women to achieve, but it is essential to be reminded of its expense.

Summary

Black students navigate systemic racism as they strive for excellence in academia (Brody et al., 2006; Hussar et al., 2020). During adolescence, Black children learn the value of Whiteness first before comprehending their own racial identity (Dulin-Keita et al., 2011; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Later, societal systems of oppression, racism, and sexism become apparent during emerging adulthood, which will continue to influence their racial consciousness. Many Black emerging adults experience negative impacts on their physiological, psychological, and sociopolitical development (Hope et

al., 2015). To better understand, the Nigrescence Model of Black Identity (Cross, 1971) and Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (Sellers et al., 1997) are theoretical frameworks that provide context to the lived experience of Black racial consciousness.

Moreover, Black women created their own space and movement to be heard with the work of Black feminism. The logical political movement of Black feminism provided a platform for the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation to be acknowledged and evaluated (Combahee River Collective, 1995). Additionally, the SBW schema resides within Black feminism and describes how Black women navigate the balancing act of portraying strength while concealing trauma (Abrams et al., 2019; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Black & Peacock, 2011; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombé, 2016). Although it is embedded with positive characteristics, recent literature highlights the impact on a Black woman's mental health (Donovan & West, 2015; West et al., 2016). Hence, Black undergraduate females must be resilient to traverse all barriers related to race and gender, but it is important to remember the expense of strength. This study aims to explore such lived experiences, in addition to the congruency with the SBW schema.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Within literature focused on the lived experiences of Black males, there is an acknowledgment of the limited empirical interest about the lived experiences of Black women (Smith et al., 2011; West et al., 2016). Hence, a sense of direction for this study was provided. Lewis et al. (2013) explicate “...there is a dearth of research exploring the coping strategies that Black women use to deal with the negative effects of the intersection of racism and sexism” (p. 52). More specifically, West et al. (2016) bring to attention the lack of literature taking into consideration a Black woman’s interpretation of the SBW schema, “...particularly Black college women who are exposed to multiple ways of embodying womanhood via their education environments” (p. 391). Thus, the following research design was developed to fill this gap.

Research Design

This study occurred during a global pandemic utilizing a phenomenological approach to conduct semi-structured interviews. Phenomenology as a methodological framework has evolved to better investigate an individual’s narratives of a specific lived experience or phenomenon which aligns with the purposes of this study (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

The topics of this study may provoke discomfort for participants, therefore qualitative interviews were the chosen method of data collection because they allow the researcher an opportunity to express intentionality and engage with participants throughout the interview (Carlson, 2010; Kolb, 2012; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Additionally, unlike a quantitative survey, qualitative interviews allow for follow-up questions by the researcher to prompt elaborations of a participant's perspective. As a result, an interview is merely the vehicle for an in-depth understanding of a participant's lived experiences. Moreover, Carlson (2010) suggests sharing portions of the participant's transcript with early interpretations will help limit any possible misinterpretations, a process known as member checking. Thus, participants were provided the opportunity to review interpretations of their transcript.

The type and order of questions were intentional as well as aimed at providing a prompt for participants to reflect upon their lived experiences related to each research question. Each interview began with an introduction to provide background information about the study, logistical information, and an opportunity for participants to ask any questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). As a result of the researcher's existing trauma concerning their racial identity, a statement of positionality was included during the introduction of the study. Following that, the interviews were structured into two parts. In part one, all questions are open-ended to allow participants the freedom to share based on their comfort level (Turner, 2010). From there, prompts were used to learn more about shared experiences related to the focus of this study (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Before moving on to part two, a grounding statement alerted the participant that they were

halfway through the interview (see Appendix E). Grounding statements are often used in therapy when working with individuals living with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. These statements are aimed to distract and calm an individual in the moment of unpleasant emotions (Najavits, 2002). By including a grounding statement halfway through the interview, the researcher communicated a psychological disruption between part one and part two. This is because part two focuses on the SBW schema. Therefore, a grounding statement served as a moment for participants to pause and orient themselves for part two.

Part Two begins with asking participants to define their interpretation of the SBW schema. This is because current literature noted this to be a limitation, “by not asking the women to define SBW in addition to describing it, [researchers] are limited in the meaning [they] can make from the data” (West et al., 2016, p. 408). From there, participants were requested to review Figure 5 and answer a set of questions (see Appendix E). After the closing statement to conclude the interview, participants were asked if open to additional questions at a later time. It is important to note that before any interviews were conducted, preliminary interviews were held, providing the researcher an opportunity to practice and receive feedback (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Roberts, 2020; Turner, 2010). The final version can be viewed in Appendix E.

Furthermore, due to the pandemic, all interviews were audio-recorded and held virtually through Zoom in compliance with safety regulations issued by the Institutional Review Board, local government, and health agencies. Lastly, participants were compensated for their time with an Amazon gift card valued at \$15.

Instruments

The demographic survey used to determine the eligibility of each participant was created and administered in Qualtrics (see Appendix D). Additionally, a schematic representation of the SBW schema (see Figure 5) was shared on-screen via Zoom for participants to reflect upon.

Recruitment

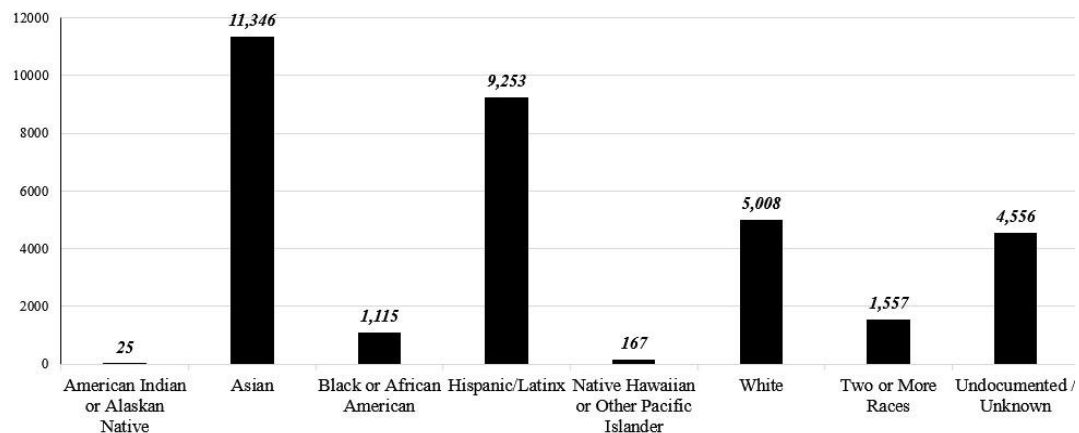
It is important to be reminded of the virtual circumstances due to the global pandemic, COVID-19, in addition to recognizing the limited participant pool available at this public university during the time of this study (California State University, 2020). The public university was closed and operated only in an online capacity. Consequently, all outreach efforts were through online media, such as email and social media posts. Through email, recruitment materials were shared via a mailing list for all Black faculty members as well as to students enrolled in courses offered by the Department of African American Studies. The email templates can be viewed in Appendix A. Through social media, recruitment materials were shared by campus resource centers, departments, and student organizations, such as a cross-cultural center and education department. The recruitment flyer can be viewed in Appendix B.

Additionally, this university is recognized as one of many Hispanic-serving institutions, in which more than 25% of undergraduate full-time students identify as Hispanic, among the 23 campuses within the California State University system (Laden, 2001). During the Fall 2020 semester, recruitment occurred and less than 3% of the

student population were eligible to participate (see Figure 6) (California State University, 2020). Although the goal was to conduct interviews with 10 participants, 6 occurred. Overall, the demographic survey received 60 responses. Once reviewed, it was determined that 12 responses were ineligible due to disclosed race and/or gender not meeting eligibility requirements of identifying with Black or African American ancestry as well as cisgender female gender expression. All remaining 48 responses were sent a consent form via DocuSign, Appendix C. Ultimately, six participants completed the consent form and participated. Once signed, a mutually convenient appointment was made for each interview. Each week that followed sending the consent form, for two weeks, a reminder email would be sent.

Figure 6

Fall 2020: Student Demographic Data of Enrollment Headcount by Ethnicity



Participants

Participants were six self-identified Black women attending a comprehensive Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) public university located in the Western United States. All names of participants are pseudonyms. Of the six participants, four had transferred

from a previous institution: Beverly, Lola, Taylor, and Valerie. Additionally, all are first-generation college students. This context is provided as much was not stated by participants about their experience of each during their interview. However, this emphasis is about how all are navigating higher education for the first time and four have done so on two college campuses. Thus, Beverly, Lola, Taylor, and Valerie's responses emanate from experiences of renavigation of their Blackness at the HSI. Please see Table 1 for the list of pseudonyms and additional characteristics.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Student	Classification	Academic Discipline	Age
Beverly	Senior	African American Studies	33
Jordan	Junior	Justice Studies	20
Lola	Senior	Psychology	29
Alex	Senior	Psychology	25
Taylor	Junior	Public Health	24
Valerie	Junior	Sociology	31

Data Analysis

Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) served as the framework of this research design as well as the constant comparison method (Thorne, 2000) was used to understand the data collected. Thorne (2000) advises the use of constant comparison for research exploring human phenomena in which social processes may explain certain lived

experiences, such as racism and sexism. This is because constant comparison begins with raw data which are analyzed to develop substantive knowledge claims (Kolb, 2012). That said, it was ensured that the coding process aligned with Strauss' and Corbin's (2008) recommendations to begin with first open coding, then axial coding, and lastly selective coding. It is also important to note that in addition to transcriptions, observations were made of each participant's emotional state and body language throughout the interview. These notes were documented in a protected electronic document.

Transcriptions were reviewed with accompanying audio and related research questions. While open coding, themes and categorizations were identified by quotes relating to or describing a similar phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Next, attempts to create connections within each theme were made allowing for possible new connections. Strauss and Corbin (2008) describe axial coding as "the inductive and deductive thinking process of relating subcategories to a category" (p. 84). During this time, a broad understanding began to form of the lived experiences gathered. The last step was selective coding to identify core categories to connect to other categories, thus validating recognized similarities (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Ultimately, this process occurred multiple times. Once data collected became repetitive with similar points being made, it was determined that saturation had been reached (Kolb, 2012).

Chapter 4: Qualitative Analysis & Findings

This study explored the lived experiences of Black and African American undergraduate females concerning racism, sexism, and the SBW schema. While selective coding, edits were made to transcripts removing vocalized pauses, such as “um” and “like,” and superfluous phrases, such as “you know,” to ensure readability. When brackets or ellipses are present, it is either to replace identifying information, show removal of vocalized pauses and superfluous phrases, or replace with more specific words to communicate the same message a bit more clearly. All edits were decisions made by participants during the member-checking process.

The following themes were identified: oppositional framing, navigation of intergroup comparisons, inferiority in the classroom, realities of the SBW schema, and gratitude for this research.

Oppositional Framing

Participants disclosed a wide range of perceptions with examples of microaggressions made about them by out-groups. Out-groups are groups that an individual does not subscribe to, relate with, or define themselves by (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Moreover, Social Identity Theory (Hogg et al., 1995) was embedded within interviews as participants referred to themselves as “we” or “us” and referred to others who are outside the Black community as “them.” This oppositional framing provided insight into how participants internalized and eventually normalized interpersonal racism. Alex shared an example:

To be honest, someone legit asked me, [as if] they couldn't believe if I was Black. They were like, “Are you halfa?” Halfa means half White and half Asian. I'm neither

one nor the other, so how did they get to this conclusion? I have...no clue. They just couldn't believe I was Black. These types of [inquiries] by them are annoying...and I bet they don't ask others who look like them those types of [questions] either. Why do we always get asked? I don't know [but] these things are just going to keep happening anyway. I'll just deal with it and focus on my education, you know?

At first, Alex rolled her eyes when sharing about the annoyance of such inquiries but by the end, she was slumped in her chair and staring at the ground. The researcher heard Alex tell herself to deal with it but witnessed the impact of dealing with it. Downey (2008) and Ogbu (2003) further explain how Black emerging adults respond to barriers of success in a psychologically protective way, thus embracing a collective identity that further defines their in-group membership. This protection can manifest into the internalization of systemic racism and serve as a coping mechanism to avoid vulnerability. As a result of this racial subordination, participants learn the value of Whiteness and subscribe to an oppositional view (Downey, 2008; Ogbu, 2003).

Valerie adds to this theme by describing how the rise in anti-racist movements in response to lethal police violence shaped her view of others.

You know, after George Floyd was murdered, people's true colors started to show. I was not surprised. It felt tense everywhere like at the grocery store...at home...or even the classroom because the topic of racism...and Black lives mattering...were at the forefront of their minds. For us, it is something we are taught to always be aware of. We may be [seen as] less than, but we matter. I can only hope they...will understand that someday. You know, some do...but more need to, I think.

The researcher noticed how Valerie acknowledges "them" as those with privilege who do not exist with racial identity being the most salient. Valerie explained that due to an uproar of anti-racist movements, out-groups started to become aware of how Black people navigate systems of oppression. However, Tatum (2017) suggests it is the color

silent disposition of contemporary society that has taught people to avoid talking about racial differences. This context provides clarity into the internalization and normalization of such oppositional framing. All in all, this zeitgeist that is avoidant of discussing inclusivity among racial differences can motivate undergraduate Black women to become self-protective and accepting of such group organization (Miller et al., 2010).

Moving forward, Alex and other participants shared sentiments of a desire for authenticity in interpersonal relationships with out-group members. Beverly mentioned:

Beverly: I think this is true for humans, but Black women definitely seem to figure it out sooner. We leave ignorant people in the past. It can be easy to entertain them, usually White folks, but ultimately, it's just painful for us women of color.

Briettany: Can you speak more about this entertainment and pain?

Beverly: Yeah, of course. I mean, it...hurts...to not have your needs met. You know, in platonic or romantic relationships with anyone. Sometimes we feel stuck and just let it happen...that is how we entertain. But, you know, it is not easy or simple to be genuine either... but it can [start] with treating others the way you'd want to be treated.

Some silence followed this moment and after a few seconds, Beverly ensured that was all she had to share. The researcher heard Beverly describe a function of this oppositional framing, creating sustainable boundaries. These boundaries are what helped participants socialize and develop interpersonal relationships with mutual respect. When authentic, allyship is feasible (Ellison, 1990). However, Beverly brings to attention how engagement with other's ignorance can lead to discomfort and increase stigma consciousness (Johnson & Pietri, 2020).

Navigation of Intergroup Comparisons

Intergroup comparisons were abundant as examples of racism, discrimination, and prejudice were reported. Taylor shared her experience of navigating intergroup comparisons but, more importantly, her perspective was also echoed by other participants.

Taylor: I think for me it had to deal with [this] defense mechanism from perceptions, because you know, as a Black girl, I was damned if you do or damned if you don't. I was...this shy person who was a pushover, or I was like this super aggressive person. It is funny because in real life, I mean, I'm mild-mannered, but...honestly...I don't even care. I feel like I actually react better now too, if they think I'm [an] angry Black woman, I don't care because I'm still [going to] say what I'm going to say and I'm right. [Before college], I really felt like I had to...people please a lot, because I was worried [about] them not being taken seriously if I'm...always too outspoken. Back then, I was very...much into [people pleasing] and then I would get hurt a lot because folks would just be...saying anything but I tried so hard to be...this nice person. [Then,] I got to college. I was like, "Okay, what has niceness done for me? It did nothing." So, I cut off my friends and then after that I said, "You know, what? No new friends. Literally, I took it to...an extreme level because I was just...I don't know if we can cuss, but wait can we cuss in this recording? [Laughs].

Briettney: [Laughs] Yes, you can.

Taylor: Okay, I was...an asshole...my first couple years in college and I was not fucking with nobody. In high school...I would want to be like, "Oh I don't [want to] lose friends" and now I'm like, "You know what, snip, snip, snip, man. It's good to lose some friends because...it's all about quality."

After revisiting Taylor's transcript with audio, the researcher realized she did indeed care. Taylor claimed to not care about other's perceptions of her, yet how she chose to continue to socialize changed. Additionally, Taylor's intonations expressed exhaustion and humility about being an asshole. Taken together, intergroup comparisons can make it be discouraging to socialize with out-groups; she describes her experience with people-pleasing to gain friends. When trying to connect with others by people-pleasing, Taylor

lacked fulfilling platonic relationships. Further, Taylor's niceness also included choosing to self-silence which can inexplicitly enable racism and sexism (Abrams et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2016). Eventually, this can lead to an oppositional framing about race and/or gender because of socially burning out (Abrams et al., 2019; Ogbu, 2003). Moreover, Taylor and other participants endorsed intersectionality as each acknowledged race and gender are the most salient experienced simultaneously (Combahee River Collective, 1995; Estrada-Martinez et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2020). This became increasingly evident as participants shared their experiences with an out-group's implicit biases via microaggressions, on- or off-campus. For Lola, Jordan, and Beverly it has been about their physical appearance.

The researcher was drawn to how Lola first introduced herself as Black and Muslim to begin the interview only at the end to mention gender.

Briettney: Lola, in the demographic survey, you self-identified as a 22-year-old Black woman, how would you describe what it is like to be in your shoes?

Lola: I feel like I don't just identify as Black but also my Muslim identity also comes into play. I guess when I talk about myself or...when I hear the word identity, [those] two things that come to my mind, Black and Muslim. I feel like they are both...very strong aspects of my identity. I feel like being both Muslim and Black in America is a big, big struggle. You know you are judged based on your skin color and also because of your religion. I am physically Muslim too. I am wearing the headscarf [so] anyone can tell I'm Muslim too. It is a double struggle, not just one. Sometimes I cannot even tell why I'm being treated differently because of my hijab...[or] is it because of my skin color? So, it's not easy and let me also add that I'm a recent immigrant. I only moved to the US three years ago from India, although I am East African and I am Somali, but I did not grow up in America, so there's a lot about the Black struggle in America that I'm very new to as well. For instance, when we try to show any sort of resistance to...resist any...mistreatment. It's considered...just being, you know...a bitch.

Although Lola has recently immigrated to the United States, the researcher noticed how she spoke of similar interactions with racism and sexism as other participants but also her own experiences with islamophobia. This speaks volumes of how loud prejudice is within America's culture. More specifically, Lola often stared upwards when speaking which is notable because it was not until the end in which gender became salient through her use of the word "bitch". The researcher believed it was Lola's effort to reclaim and empower the term to describe a woman's strength to resist sexism. Additionally, Lola threatens the boundaries of womanhood within today's sexist society. Currently, a woman's worth is based upon European notions of hegemonic femininity, such as physical appearance relative to a dominant beauty standard and household management (Chaney, 2001). By doing more than the aforementioned, a woman is redefining societal norms of womanhood. Likewise, Chaney (2001) found that Black women embrace a modified definition of womanhood which values some elements of the dominant culture, such as strength and sensitivity.

Moreover, Lola's experience grows limited research of the psychological impact of religious microaggressions. Nadal et al. (2012) confer that since the terrorist attacks on September 11th in 2001, Muslim Americans have increasingly experienced overt discrimination, such as islamophobia and mockery of cultural attire.

Lola: When I first began applying for jobs...I think it was for a salon, a receptionist at a salon. Yeah. When we spoke on the phone, everything was okay. The manager really liked my work experience and everything. Then, when she met me in person, she didn't know I wear a headscarf, I could visibly see... a weird expression like, "Do you really wear that?" It wasn't a pleasant reaction. I could clearly tell it's a negative one. She actually went ahead and said, "Our salon represents the beauty industry and I feel like what you're wearing does not align with that. Would you mind wearing our

uniform?” That's how she tried to put it...in a professional manner [as if it] applied to everybody. It's not just you, it's like everyone is wearing this uniform.

Briettney: It sounds like you heard something different.

Lola: Yes, and I didn't like it. I'm like, “Okay, no, I can't take this off and I can't wear pants” We don't wear pants either. We just wear...dresses. I think that's actually the first time I felt like, “Oh my headscarf is a problem?” I, of course, did not take that job and she didn't call me back either.

The researcher noted how nonchalant Lola was during the interview while sharing this lived experience and prompted her to share more about her reaction. Many scholars note that continuous rumination of other's perceptions can lead to adverse mental health outcomes (Donovan & West, 2015; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West et al., 2016). Further, Brooker (2016) and Lewis et al. (2013) list isolation, fatigue, and poor academic achievement as possible outcomes for Black undergraduate students when campus culture consists of microaggressions and race representation inquiries. Furthermore, Smith et al. (2011) discuss racial battle fatigue as another outcome when the aforementioned occurs for an extended time, thus becoming a strain on the individual. Now for the purposes of this study, the focus is on emotional labor by fatigue because of the impact of intergroup comparisons on Black women during their collegiate experience. However, it is important to note that fatigue is dynamic with multiple dimensions.

Moreover, Jordan recalls a recent event with her previous supervisor as she states that microaggressions occur often and in many contexts. It is important to note that this was one of a few motivating factors for Jordan to ultimately leave this position.

Jordan: I met one of my best friends in college. Her name is Myra. Just her presence and being able to relate to someone so closely about my experience, like doing my hair, it's just such a big part of feeling comfortable in college. Because, my whole life, I've worn braids and everyone's like, “Oh, what are those?” She knew and it was

nice to be able to sit [with her] and talk about that along with other microaggressions that I faced in the classroom.

Briettney: You mentioned microaggressions. Can you give me an example of one that you've experienced?

Jordan: So just even outside of [my] academic career, just everyday walking or walking into the store and being looked at funny. That's not right for your body. Anyways, one of the most recent ones was having to do with my boss grabbing my hair and...pretty much calling me "nappy-headed". [My White best friend] didn't really understand and she acknowledged that she didn't understand, but it wasn't until I talk to Myra and my mom. They're like, "That is not okay!" I never fully understood until I was in college. People touch my hair all the time, but I was just like, "Okay, like it's okay.", but I never fully felt inferior to it and figured I just have to go through it.

By Jordan's supervisor being an out-group member, Jordan was confronted with an intergroup comparison based on hair texture. Now, during this time, Jordan had yet to fully understand the meaning of being Black. Thus, she had no clear reaction and sought guidance from within her in-group, a Black friend, and her mother as well as an out-group, the White best friend (Hogg et al., 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As a result of social identification, Jordan accepted that inferiority was part of her in-group experience that she had yet to learn until in college (Hogg et al., 1995). Following this, Jordan reflected on what it meant to be Black enough.

Jordan: It's discouraging. It makes me feel like I'm not enough in certain settings. It...definitely affects my self-esteem and my confidence level. I went to schools technically out of my district, nothing that my siblings [attended]. I would just remember because again I was in a predominantly White and LatinX community, I was often told that I wasn't Black enough. That's...a constant thing that I remember. My freshman year of high school, I went to [a] private school, whole different setting, no Black people, and I was just constantly told that I didn't meet other people's expectations and just not Black enough, but I didn't know what that meant.

At this moment, the researcher noticed that Jordan spoke about how she had thought about what it meant to be Black enough in the past but not in the present moment.

Therefore, the researcher prompted a follow-up question.

Briettney: Now, what does it mean to you?

Jordan: Now, it's just who defines Black enough? Black comes in all different types of...people and...there's no one type of Black. If I just would have realized that sooner...just because I'm not your stereotypical Black woman [or] what people would think to be a Black woman, doesn't make me less of one.

Jordan's philosophy about Blackness parallels with the nationalist's view within the Nigrescence Identity Model (NIM) (Vandiver et al., 2001). She is aware of others' views of her in-group, the Black community, and stresses the importance of ignoring out-group perceptions made about Black women due to their lack of influence. All in all, it seemed that self-esteem was a byproduct for Jordan when prompted to reflect at this moment (Brown, 2000).

Inferiority in the Classroom

Many participants shared examples of feeling inferior in the classroom while in high school and during their collegiate studies. All examples were either an interaction with classmates or faculty in which the participant was left confused and feeling less than, specifically of White classmates. Further, these lived experiences have lingered with each participant for decades and some share the toll it has paid on their mental health.

Nonetheless, the Nigrescence Identity Model (NIM) would name these experiences as an encounter that has contributed to each participant's understanding of self, related to race (Vandiver et al., 2001). To begin, Beverly shares how she and her sisters were treated when entering a new high school.

Beverly: You know, I've come to accept the fact that any of the other nationalities that I am will not be seen by society. Nobody seems to recognize those at all, they see me and they just see this...strong Black woman.

Briettmy: Can you tell me about a particular experience of how you've learned that that occurs?

Beverly: Absolutely, so I can think of one right away. Well early on, my sisters and I, we switched schools a lot because we moved a lot. And because of that, we would lean on each other when it came to...going to a new school, right? We were living in Virginia at the time and we were starting a new school, terrified, of course. We got ready to go to our first class the...three of us together and everybody...they just stopped and...watched. [It was kind of] like walking into a beauty supply store and you're not the only person in the store. But, because you're the Black person in the store and the one that's being watched, they expect you to steal something. That's what it was like on the first day of school... every time we were starting a new school and people had just decided that we were mean or we were stuck up. No matter where it fell in the school year [that] was our first day of school. As I got older, it became starting my first day at work and how people looked at me and the way they treated me. So, this particular day of high school people...looked at us like we were poison. And I talked to some of those people later on...in the year and then I asked [them], "Why is that?" And one of the girls responded to me and she [said], "We just thought that you guys were stuck up. You look like you had your nose in the air" And I said, "Really, what does that look like?" I...really didn't understand that, but [that is] something that I've noticed that I have dealt with my entire life is this notion of being stared at for being less than.

There is overlap with the previous theme as Beverly shared examples of how intergroup comparison occurred in the classroom and other spaces, such as a work environment. However, the focus here is the prejudice exerted by others and Beverly's reaction to feeling less than because this same experience is often experienced by Black youth (Brody et al., 2006). Further, this memory has stayed with Beverly into her adult life and served as a racial awakening of how racism persists in everyday life (Neville & Cross, 2017).

Jordan also shared a past time from high school about a difference in treatment by her teacher when responding to students sharing their career aspirations. Her tone was rather annoyed.

Jordan: Yeah, so for as long as I can remember since high school, I've had teachers telling me, "You realize it's a lot of work to become a lawyer." Or, "You realize it's a lot to do this. You realize it's a lot to do that." I didn't really get it until I saw White male counterparts say exactly the same thing that I said, about wanting to be a lawyer, and teachers encouraging them. I didn't quite fully understand, like why?

At this moment, the researcher was mindful of their phrasing to prompt Jordan to unpack this memory. This is because the researcher noticed Jordan seemingly react to her question. Jordan made facial expressions that seemed to resemble confusion because of her eyebrows becoming pressed together while looking away from her webcam. For less than 30 seconds, the researcher and the participant sat in silence.

Briettney: If I may follow up, you talked about not fully understanding how your teachers encouraged your White male peers but not you. Now, how do you understand it?

Jordan: Hm, now...well now, being older and growing into myself more as a Black woman in college...I guess, I get it. The gatekeeping of folks of color just continues this cycle, you know? There's still [not enough] representation. I don't know, it's still a bit confusing to me. It is not something I agree with but I am definitely more [aware] of what racism looks like than [when] I was in high school.

Like Beverly, Jordan's confusion has shaped her racial consciousness. At first, Jordan recalled confusion which she then defined as gatekeeping once prompted to reflect upon this classroom experience at that moment. It was through this described preferential treatment that she learned the value of Whiteness (Dulin-Keita et al., 2011; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Nonetheless, Jordan describes how her teachers supported the career aspirations of their White male students but discouraged students of color from

certain careers. Austin (2004) noted that oppressed communities can often react to privilege by feeling inferior to the majority. For Jordan, it would not be for a few years until she learned the language to name examples of racism, such as gatekeeping. Additionally, Jordan did not describe this as a single instance. There was depth in her response as she spoke to this specific example but also highlighted its occurrence as common.

Moreover, Alex had spoken of an analogous experience with peers during a group project. As Alex was reminded of this example, she seemed a bit agitated as she would sigh heavily while sharing.

Too often, especially when with a group, we're ignored. For example, I had a group project last semester, right? There was...about 5 of us and we were a pretty diverse group of myself, a White girl, and a few Latinas. But by the end, I just...checked out. It was because...the White girl and one of the Latina girls would literally say the same ideas as me and be heard, get feedback, and acknowledgment. I called it out...in the beginning but no one seemed to care. Maybe it was just a me thing, but it...bothered me. I would start to think, "Why do they get the credit for the same ideas I mentioned earlier?" and started comparing myself. It was bad.

Alex's example is what Chung et al. (2014) meant by the undergraduate Black women experience feeling like a "being a little fish in a big pond" (p. 471). The researcher heard Alex claim responsibility of being ignored by describing the internalized uncertainty and gaslighting as an Alex-thing. Of course, this was not an Alex-thing. This phrasing implied Alex's judgment of the character of these peers. Throughout the group project, Alex shared how she remained unheard within the group's communication even after bringing it to their attention. Further, Alex's lived experience reminded the researcher of how sexism can function within organizations. For example, Konrad et al. (2008) reported identical findings during interviews with 50 women about their

experience on executive boards of Fortune 1000 organizations. Similar to the researcher, Konrad et al. (2008) noticed exhaustion among their participants due to having to reclaim space in conversations as well as the negative impact on their mental health.

Lastly, Taylor brought to attention the direct impact teachers and faculty can have on a student's academic achievement when a sense of belonging is absent (Lewis et al., 2013). While sharing, Taylor began to cross her arms, stare downwards, and became louder with frustration.

I had teachers straight up tell me, "Oh someone like you is never going to achieve great things in life." You know, [I] just took a math class. And I was like, "Okay, and?" And you know, other classes that I've [taken] teachers have...question why I was there and I feel like that...really [made me] sort of feel...really inferior most of the time. Later, actually, [it] was an honor class and I felt like, "Okay, well, what do I have to offer? What do I have to say, you know?" Suddenly, my whole sense of worth was tied to just academia and...it took a while to actually shake it off once I got into college to be honest.

All the above speaks to the importance of a student's development of a sense of belonging in addition to self-efficacy, regardless of grade level. The examples reported concurred with racial socialization literature focused on teachers' responsibility to create safe spaces for learning (Booker, 2016; Hunter et al., 2019). Delano-Oriaran and Parks (2015) describe these learning environments as "classroom environments where students feel secure and empowered to engage in civil, honest, critical, and challenging dialogues about sensitive issues" (p. 17). When teachers fail to do so, minority students can become isolated, fatigued, and lack the motivation to build relationships with their peers (Booker, 2016; Lewis et al., 2013). Lastly, whether a student is in K-12 or higher education, the confidence within themselves to exist authentically is powerful and what seemed to be

lacking for participants due to the racist and sexist environments they have had to navigate (Nguyen & Anthony, 2014).

Realities of the Strong Black Woman Schema

When asked to define the SBW schema, participants used words that resonate with the current SBW definition (see Figure 7) (Abrams et al., 2019). This overlap confirms some congruity between concepts within the SBW schema, such as psychological hardiness as well as the dual responsibilities as a caretaker and provider. However, all terms participants used are non-gendered and non-racial.

Figure 7

Terms Used to Define SBW Schema by Participants

SBW Terms and Phrases From Definition	Participant Terms
• Warrior	leader and advocate
• Psychological hardiness	wise, educated, vulnerable, strong, confident, and resilient
• Endurance despite adversity	kind, determined, accountable, and heartwarming
• A multiplicity of responsibilities, such as provider and caretaker	career-oriented, caretaker, and supporter

Yet, when asked to elaborate further many participants would first describe the SBW in a dissociative manner, specifically, as a stereotype. For instance, Taylor shared how the depiction of the SBW in the media influenced her perspective of the SBW as an idea rather than a person. It is important to note Taylor's tone was rather blunt and aggrieved.

When it comes to the stereotype, it's usually this...Black best friend you see in movies and stuff like that. Do they have a life outside of the person they're supporting and

carrying? Do they got a family? We don't know. They're just there to snap their fingers and...support the main character. Like, Black woman as this superhero, who [have] this armor and [are] superhuman to the point where they're not even a person at all. You can come to her for help. You can come to her for support. You can come to her for anything. She never has to come to you and...this person isn't even a person, it's just an idea. That's why I hate the whole strong Black woman. It's just an idea.

Additionally, Valerie also spoke about the media's portrayal of SBW and her thoughts regarding it as a stereotype. Like Taylor, this seemed to be a topic of frustration for Valerie as she rolled her eyes, paused to collect her thoughts, and sighed often.

Yeah, there could be the strong Black woman, like...the ghetto Black friend or...the lighter-skinned [girl], but it is all super sexualized too. I think...it's just easy to stay with that stereotype. The whole I don't need a man. I don't need this. I don't need that. I can do it all myself. There's nothing wrong with that and I think that that is a source of strength as well. But, I'm just saying... I think the strong Black woman can mean so much more than that.

Jordan also acknowledged the SBW as a stereotype but shared how she and other Black women could embrace it. Jordan expressed this with such optimism and hope for the future as she would pause to nod validating her own words.

I think [the] very first thing that comes to mind is...fully coping with it in terms of me sitting with it and truly understanding what it means to be [a SBW] in a way that it's always going to be present. I can't say always, but the stereotype is always going to present. I guess...being above it is more so of embracing it, but embracing it in a way where you're able to advocate for yourself and understand that you know there's more to it. There are pros and then we have the cons. It's being able to navigate a Black woman's life and in terms of, "Yes, this is my narrative. I am a strong Black woman, but this isn't necessarily...the path that it has to lead down for me. I don't have to let the anxiety and depression...be my end-all-be-all in terms of determining the way that I live my life." I think living above it is being able to take those things to cope into, "I am a strong Black woman and just okay, [this is my] experience but I know how to get out of that because it's not my identity."

Opinions may differ; however, it is endorsement and internalization that create the nuances of a Black women's experience with the SBW schema (Donovan & West, 2015; West et al., 2016). For Taylor and Valerie, each seemed to have significantly internalized

the SBW schema which has affected their mental health. Taylor elaborated a bit more about her anxiety with the SBW schema:

To be honest, living with anxiety was just really hard because I think, once again, folks would always confuse...my shyness, which was really due to social anxiety, as sort of...a bitchiness or...a resting bitchface. And it's just like no. I'm socially awkward and I don't know how to compute in this...group session right now.

Yet, Jordan who has somewhat endorsed the SBW schema explained that Black women can embrace it to overcome it as a stereotype which is an opposite view than Taylor and Valerie. Therefore, Jordan is motivated to exist beyond the script of this stereotype rather than fueling the frustration with it. Overall, the congruency between the SBW schema and the lived experiences of these participants exists with some discrepancies.

Moving forward, upon reflection of each presented characteristic of the SBW schema there were mixed emotions as well as reactions. On one hand, all participants did not resonate with the characteristics related to a SBW's obligation to manifest strength while suppressing emotions as well as to resist vulnerability. On the other hand, all participants did resonate with each presented perceived conflict of the SBW schema. Each characteristic and perceived conflict is discussed below to highlight the rationale shared among participants beyond their yes or no responses.

Characteristic: Determination to Succeed, Despite Limited Resources

Participants related strongly to this characteristic and reported on how it is experienced. The overall consensus was that it is a daily uphill battle to exist within the intersection of Black and female. However, a determination to succeed fuels the

motivation to achieve the same, if not more, with limited resources than others who have access to an abundance due to their privilege and Jordan speaks to this perspective.

I really agree with this one...because no matter what, no matter what, it is a constant uphill battle. And, okay, I may not have the resources other people are afforded to but I am going to keep going and make my way. So, this is a good one. Further, Lola and Alex also reported this characteristic to be true but because of the quality of resources available not meeting the needs of Black women. As a result, Alex explained, Black women must learn to stay determined to succeed with limited resources.

This one is interesting. I want to fully support it...and I do...but I am also thinking about why this is, you know? Despite limited resources...I think this would be different if the resources available were of a better quality. We have to be determined to succeed because less help exists for us.

Now, both these participants are currently studying psychology and it was Lola who shared that this is a topic spoken in class that motivates them to pursue a career devoted to the betterment of the mental health of Black women.

Yes and I feel like mental health is actually something...that is so taboo for us, for the Black community, and I have learned a ton of other barriers that I was not aware of through my education in terms of...accessibility to...mental health services for Black people. I'm trying my best to just get into grad school, graduate, get my license, and make mental health more accessible to my community. So that we do not have these barriers, so we do not have these perceived conflicts, and we're able to succeed and thrive just like other communities. I feel like even if we have the education, even if we have the other resources our mental health is not good. Then, we won't be able to continue progressing, thriving, and doing things we want to do. So, this is exactly why I'm trying to become a clinical psychologist or counselor.

Characteristic: Obligation to Manifest Strength and Suppress Emotions

This characteristic was met with facial expressions of disagreement and confusion, such as head shaking from left to right and eyebrows were drawn together. Valerie and Alex expressed criticism of the term obligation.

Valerie: So, for the first one...obligation to manifest strength and suppress emotions. I feel like I agree with the manifesting strength, but maybe not the suppressing emotions part.

Briettmy: Yeah, tell me more about that.

Valerie: Yeah, and I don't know that I like the word obligation either. But yeah...my idea of a strong Black woman would be that...she manifests strength from, inside or God or wherever it comes from. But I don't think suppressing emotions is necessarily something that makes you strong, in my opinion. I think the ability to be vulnerable actually makes you strong. So yeah, but I could see why that would be kind of a stereotype in literature.

Whereas other participants believed that strong Black women enact strength by presenting their authentic self and not suppressing their emotions. For instance, Taylor shared how she used to endorse this characteristic by people-pleasing, but now as a strong Black woman could care less to suppress her emotions and force strength.

So, when it comes to the first one, obligation to manifest strength and suppress emotions. I used to do that...in certain situations where...you feel like you have to get ahead and if you express any emotions, you're probably just going to be damned at that point. I...recognize this [characteristic] because...that's what I was trying to really do. I was trying to...come off as this person who can keep it cool, calm, and collected. You know, not really show any emotions where I just wanted to seriously...straight up and cry. Now I cry and I don't care.

Likewise, Beverly expressed how strong Black women do not live with an obligatory responsibility to be strong or suppress their emotions. She talked about how for some it can be intimidating to be in the presence of a strong Black woman because of their emotions being shared genuinely.

Oh no, strong Black women don't need to do all that. We are strong as a result of the disparities our community faces and the resilience we learn is not an obligation. Often, the mental breakdowns happen and we express them. Sometimes it is almost...scary for others to see that, I think. Maybe...event intimidating because this is the stereotype, obligation to manifest and suppress. I don't agree.

Ultimately, for most participants, their final responses to this characteristic required multiple readings of it.

Characteristic: Resistance to Being Vulnerable or Dependent

Lola was the only participant to agree with this characteristic. For Lola, it has been normalized to not ask for help because of wanting and needing to do everything herself.

I agree with it, resistance to being vulnerable. You're like, I don't [want to] be vulnerable. I don't want to be dependent on anyone else because I know that I can't rely on anyone else. I won't be given the help that I need anyway so I'm going to do things on my own. Then, I do not want to appear to need the help. You know, I'm going to resist it, and even if someone is being genuine about it. Let's be honest, if someone is trying to genuinely help us, we try to...not take that help. Just want to do everything on our own because we're so used to it.

The researcher noted how Lola seemingly wants to be able to ask for support in all she does yet has comprehended that she cannot. Through her lived experiences in India and America, Lola has developed this strategy which can be saddening as well as isolating to navigate when in difficult situations and unable to ask for support. Moving forward, all other participants thought differently. The disagreement for this was as a belief that strong Black women are strong by being vulnerable. Valerie explains:

I think it's okay to be vulnerable as a woman and I think Black women, Black women have...this stereotype that we're almost like emasculated. I don't think there's anything wrong with wanting to be in a relationship or wanting to be seen as you know soft, at sometimes, feminine. I think you can do that at the same time as being a strong woman.

Taylor shared a similar perspective but homed in on strong Black women still being a person who is capable of feeling emotions other than to be strong.

Uhm, resistance to being vulnerable or dependent. Now that's the one I don't agree with because when it comes to the Black woman, we cry, we laugh, we get angry, you get anxious, we get down, [and] we get depressed. That's the one thing I don't agree with because...that sounds like Black women only have one emotion. I don't [want

to] say...strength is an emotion, but why do I feel because of when it is [about] Black woman, it is?
Although Jordan also reported this characteristic to be true, she claimed it is not by choice because strong Black women are placed into positions in which they must resist being vulnerable or dependent.

I don't fully believe in the last one. I think not being vulnerable can be a sign of weakness. It is...more of...how do I say it? Because I think a strong Black woman is not resistant to being vulnerable or dependent, I think they are put into situations where they are forced to be resistant. I don't think the first instinct is to be...closed off or dependent. It can be because as the other slide shows anxiety, depression, and stuff like that it becomes a lot to deal with. Again, I think it is all a reaction because we're made to always be a strong Black woman...because of the societal pressures...of feeling like having to always be that way.

Perceived Conflict: Strain in Interpersonal Relationships

Jordan, Lola, and Taylor shared specific examples of the strains in their interpersonal relationships further adding to the importance of this perceived conflict within the SBW schema. The perspectives are alike and nuanced, albeit all participants agreed with this perceived conflict (Donovan & West, 2015; West et al., 2016). Nonetheless, these perspectives were similar to Woods-Giscombé (2010) findings of how Black women struggle with vulnerability, such as the fear of or resistance to it. Jordan shared her thoughts about how strong Black women can feel lonely due to others being intimidated by their strength.

Just elaborating a little bit more on...the strain in interpersonal relationships, being a strong Black woman can be, like I mentioned before, intimidating to some. I think when...Black people... have to so call portray...their strongness or...really have to live in their strength, that's the only way...they can survive in certain settings. Yeah, for family members it can be [looked] down upon because it's like, "Okay, well, you're just strong and you're so independent. Then you can do it yourself. You don't need to be [at home], right?" But I think that turns into being a strong Black woman feeling lonely a lot because certainly...the way that people view you, or the way that people view Black woman, and the stereotypes in those narratives can be damaging.

In terms of making [Black woman] very lonely and...not being able to be vulnerable...like not being able to vulnerable because [of] the way that people see you and the way that you eventually see yourself, [as a result of] the way that other people see you.

Further, Woods-Giscombé (2010) learned that Black women have an innate nature to be self-sufficient, thus not accepting help from others. Lola described the same thing and reported the type of questions she has been confronted with by others witnessing her strength and advocacy.

It's like honestly, it makes it just so difficult to have a normal conversation without others pointing out, "Hey, you're too independent or you're too this or too that. Can you not be that strong? Can you not have...strong opinions?" It's just so weird. It's like somebody asking [you] not to be who you are and if you comply and agree, then we're [going to] be...where the problem is but then I'm not myself. You're being denied who you are.

Moreover, when Black individuals are summoned to educate an out-group about their in-group, the Black community, the frustration of doing so can lead to difficulty in relationship building (Anyu, 2020). Taylor recalled how at 12-years-old she felt the responsibility to do so when claimed to be someone's Black friend.

I could think of this one moment where my friend was like, "Oh my god, you're like my best Black friend!" and I said, "What? What? Uhm? You're only Black friend?" and you know, it's like, "Why?" I had to sit her down and have a whole conversation about that and...this happened in middle school. I'm 12-years-old and I have to teach someone what...it means to [be] me.

This memory provided another lens to this perceived conflict, for instance, it can be due to ignorance that strains in relationships occur. Further, this encounter during her adolescence adds to the literature of what Black youth experience in the classroom where they exist as a minority (Hussar et al., 2020).

Perceived Conflict: Stress-related Health Behaviors

Participants shared identical examples of stress-related behaviors noted in Woods-Giscombé (2010) findings, such as emotional eating and inadequate sleep schedules. Lola agrees with this perceived conflict as she shared a bit about her stress-related health behaviors, such as emotional eating and the postponement of self-care.

I haven't been given that sort of upbringing where I'm reminded that I, you know, need to take care of myself. I guess it's not something that is in our culture anyway. When we're expected to serve others, do everything right, you're not encouraged to take care of yourself. And emotional eating honestly, I struggle with that a lot. Food sometimes becomes sort of like a way to feel better. I'll give you a very good example. The past month or so I gained literally 5 pounds because of all the stress [I] was eating sweets, and all of the weight fluctuations tells you, "Yeah, this is when [Lola] is stressed. She gained five pounds; she's definitely going through something."

Additionally, Taylor shared about her inadequate sleep schedule as a result of her anxiety.

I'm not [going to] lie, I can't even...go on social media because I'm just done, personally with all the ignorance. And...my anxiety is something that I have to deal with for the rest of my life. But it does...affect me in other ways...for example, my sleep schedule is not like the best.

Alex also had commented on how she often has supported the strong Black women in her life who struggle with the postponement of self-care.

Oh, this one, yeah, I agree. I agree because often the strong Black woman that I know forget to help themselves. My mom, mentors, and some friends are the...definition of self-less. It is like the caretaker role is something they never turn off or better...yet do for themselves. This one is so true.

Perceived Conflict: Embodiment of Stress

Alex, Taylor, and Valerie described their encounters with stress and how strong Black women in their life as well as themselves, who self-identified as SBW, indeed embody stress. Woods-Giscombé (2010) grouped anxiety, depressive symptoms, and adverse mental health as elements of this perceived conflict. Further, this perceived conflict is congruent because of the overlap between Woods-Giscombé (2010) findings and the lived experiences of these participants. It is important to note that when expressing their confirmation of this perceived conflict, it was with much excitement and support. It was as if it would have been problematic if this perceived conflict were not listed with the schema. First, Alex mentioned the complexities of advocacy as a Black woman.

Yeah, absolutely, that's a given. To deal with racism and sexism at the same time... I feel like it comes with a requirement to compartmentalize the daily stressors or whatever the moment is because if I react, or even advocate, what am I? An advocate? Or an angry Black woman? So, we embody it, just like this says.

Next, Taylor talked about her adverse mental health this past year regarding acts of police violence, anti-racist movements, and how media coverage of it can be exhausting.

So, for example, like this year alone was just...beyond stressful, you know. Honestly, [it] just made me feel down for so many months. Just...realizing that...we, my humanity is just never going to recognize in this country and...it's so weird to be in classes like...public health, especially. As a Black woman, especially, it just feels anxiety-inducing to see anything on the news.

Lastly, Valerie also mentioned her support for this perceived conflict because of the prevalence of media coverage about the Black community and how it can affect a Black individual's mental health.

I would say yes, absolutely, even just with my example of just having to witness things on the news...about, you know, members of our community. I think that obviously can bring depression, anxiety, and all of that.

Gratitude for This Research

There were a few moments after an interview in which some participants would express gratitude for this research and the opportunity to participate. Taylor shared:

Honestly, I want to thank you for this because I know...[misogynoir] itself was recently coined in the last few years and...I'm so excited to see...what type of...literature is going to come out. Honestly, I'm so happy to see someone like you who's doing this and...I'm so excited to see how your project is [going to] be like. I don't know if you can, but...I would love to see the link to your research project.

Additionally, Lola said:

Thank you, Briettmy. I loved this conversation. I'm so glad I decided to do this. I thought I wasn't [going to] be able to [because] of being recently immigrating to America. Thank you so much...and what you're doing too with your career and your research is so vital...so important and so...needed... which is why when I saw it on my LinkedIn feed, I knew I needed to do this. I need to help her. I need to.

Lastly, Beverly commented:

Wow, that's it? Can you believe that's all we've been asking people to do for centuries, we just did? Thank you, Briettmy. Thank you for hearing me and...other Black women. I wish you the best of luck in finishing your thesis. I can wait to write one but... when I do, I'll remember this experience.

The interviews provided a space for these undergraduate Black women to share their lived experiences with racism, sexism, and the SBW schema. In short, it was their hour for each of them to be heard completely. This gratitude may have been an extension of their kindness; however, the larger meaning is how each highlighted the significance of this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

All interviews were conducted virtually with the use of Zoom, web conferencing software, due to the global pandemic, COVID-19 virus. Not too long before this pandemic had altered everyday life, America experienced an uproar of anti-racist movements following the deaths of many Black people at the hands of police. Meanwhile, a presidential election charged with racist rhetoric escalated into a coup storming the White House. For Black undergraduate students, much was happening outside of their lives as students. Yet, technology allowed for some sense of normalcy to continue, including this research.

Technological difficulties were expected and happened, such as software not cooperating and inconsistent internet connections. Had the interviews been conducted during a time without a concurrent global pandemic or racist rhetoric throughout a presidential election, it may be that a participant's racial salience and centrality would have influenced their recollection of racist or sexist interactions. Additionally, an in-person first impression of the researcher and participant could have had a different tone before the citing of the positionality statement. Nonetheless, it was still possible to build rapport with participants, display figures via sharing a screen and be the instrument of this research through a screen. All in all, it was not as different as anticipated.

The findings of this study have resulted in implications for practice among professional staff and faculty within higher education. Recommendations are suggested for Black placemaking on college campuses and professional development to aid faculty in serving their students inclusively.

Implications

The outcomes of this study provide context about the experience of living within the intersections of race and gender, specifically for undergraduate Black women.

Participants shared examples of microaggressions, moments of inferiority, and encounters of discrimination by faculty or peers. All can leave a negative impact upon a student's self-discovery journey during their collegiate experience. Based upon findings gleaned from the lived experiences of participants in this study, the following implications are suggested for implementation ensuring Black women are welcomed and supported while striving for success during their studies.

Black Placemaking for Students

Hunter et al. (2016) provide the following definition: "Black placemaking refers to the ways that urban Black Americans create sites of endurance, belonging, and resistance through social interaction" (p. 31). When implemented, the goal of Black placemaking is to counter the monolithic narrative of Black people as "victims without agency and multifaced lives" (Tichavakunda, 2020, p. 5). For many participants, it was hopeless to offer a new narrative because of being silenced or choosing to remain silent.

Tichavakunda (2020) acknowledges that space and place are contested terms but emphasizes the depth of each concept. Spaces are measured in objective terms, for instance, size or volume, to hold a *priori* status (Casey, 1996). However, places are spaces that hold history and are filled with "people, practices, objects, and representations" (Gieryn, 200, p. 465).

Currently, it is not a requirement for predominately or historically White schools or institutions to have Black places (Hunter et al., 2016). Thus, the opportunity for Black students to exist authentically has been missed. Whether creating or evolving current Black spaces on college campuses, Tichavakunda (2020) calls out to Black faculty, graduate students, and student affairs professionals to take initiative for themselves but also collectively. This is because Black undergraduate students are not the only people who create Black spaces (Hunter et al., 2016; Tichavakunda, 2020).

Further, it is when Black placemaking is genuine, soulful, and purposeful that Hunter et al. (2016) explains the true potential of each student can be unlocked and hope for a more equitable world can also be restored. For Black women, through these spaces development of school belonging is possible, validation in and outside the classroom can occur, and self-protective measures can be lowered for them to live unapologetically (Kelly et al., 2019). Some examples of current Black places include but are not limited to Black Student Unions, church groups, Black and African American studies departments, and Black Greek organizations (Keels, 2020; Tichavakunda, 2020). Furthermore, while strides are made in Black placemaking, college administrators can be attentive to how Black communities on their campuses serve themselves and others in a response to policies that shape their collegiate experiences (Tichavakunda, 2020).

Emancipatory Teaching: Professional Development for Faculty

Teaching is more than professing in the front of a room. Faculty are responsible for the facilitation of learning based on a curriculum, at minimum. However, faculty who can build rapport, motivate, and mentor students strive to do more than profess. Regardless,

faculty members must be interculturally aware of their identity as well as their students' identities (Alemi & Tajeddin, 2020). By doing so, classroom environments can be safe spaces for undergraduate Black women to truly express themselves (Booker, 2016).

Professional development opportunities focused on emancipatory pedagogy can be a way to support faculty in unpacking implicit biases, understand and curate an emancipatory teaching style, and serving students through allyship. Emancipatory pedagogy aims at the “manifestation of humanization, critical conscientization, and a problem-posing education system” (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014, p. 76). This happens in classrooms where students are invited by faculty to critically ponder the political and social issues within contemporary society, including all ramifications of social inequity (Bevis & Murray, 1990; Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014).

When an emancipatory approach is used, Cincera et al. (2019) found that faculty members reported a higher satisfaction from their work and the same for their students. Notably, the faculty who participated in Cincera et al. (2019) study were directed to avoid facilitation of their curriculum through lecture-based learning and incorporate group discussions with open-ended questions. The simplicity in this change proved to be more engaging for students and less oppressive of their learning while students learned from one another (Bevis & Murray, 1990; Cincera et al., 2019). Taken together, professional development opportunities in emancipatory teaching would benefit both faculty and students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Within literature focused on the lived experiences of Black males, there is an acknowledgment of the limited empirical interest about the lived experiences of Black women (Smith et al., 2011; West et al., 2016). First, there should be more research focused on the lived experiences of undergraduate Black women. More specifically, longitudinal qualitative research that would follow participants throughout their collegiate studies is highly recommended. Secondly, future research can also explore other intersections of identity, for instance, religion or sexual orientation. That said, future research can also hear from those who identify within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual or Ally (LGBTQIA+) community to understand their experiences with their Black identity. Additionally, racial battle fatigue was left unexplored in this study and future research can seek to better understand how Black women experience this on or off-campus. Lastly, the institutional type and location may impact the student demographic available to participate. It may be of interest to work with non-Hispanic Serving Institutions, such as institutions that are predominately or historically White.

Conclusion

This study contributed to the limited research available focused on the lived experiences of Black women in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree. The gratitude expressed for this study by each participant was a reminder that higher education still has some work to do. Diversity, equity, and inclusivity work in higher education is complex and strides have occurred. However, more platforms need to exist for Black voices to be

heard in addition to spaces in which they are explicitly welcomed. Moreover, the implications of this study focused on efforts that could be implemented to aid colleges and universities to move beyond performative mission and value statements.

Undergraduate Black women are a growing population; therefore, it is crucial that all levels of higher education, from students to administrators, become engaged in creating or evolving spaces for them.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Emails

Recruitment: Email Invitation Template for Faculty

Subject: Recruitment for Graduate Research Study

Dear (faculty name),

My name is Briettney Curtner and I am a graduate student within the Counselor Education Department. I am working on my master's thesis and conducting research to understand the lived experience of Black and African American females pursuing a bachelor's degree at SJSU.

The study involves individual interviews via Zoom for 1 hour and participants will be compensated for their time with an Amazon gift card. If possible, may I be a guest to your class to make a similar announcement? If not, may I share a flyer with you to share with your students?

Of course, happy to meet to discuss further. Please let me know what questions you may have. Dr. Jason Laker, Faculty Advisor, may also be reached for questions at jason.laker@sjsu.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Briettney Curtner

Recruitment: Email Invitation Template for Staff

Subject: Recruitment for Graduate Research Study

Dear (staff name)

My name is Briettney Curtner and I am a graduate student within the Counselor Education Department. I am working on my master's thesis and conducting research to understand the lived experience of Black and African American females pursuing a bachelor's degree at SJSU.

The study involves individual interviews via Zoom for 1 hour and participants will be compensated for their time with an Amazon gift card. If possible, may I share a flyer with you to post on your social media accounts and/or include in your newsletter?

Of course, happy to meet to discuss further. Please let me know what questions you may have. Dr. Jason Laker, Faculty Advisor, may also be reached for questions at jason.laker@sjsu.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Briettney Curtner

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

Seeking Research Participants

Misogynoir - Undergraduate Experiences by Black Females

The purpose of this study is to provide further research on the impact of **systemic racism** and **sexism** on **Black and African American women** pursuing a bachelor's degree at SJSU.

Eligible participants:

- Identify as Black or African American ancestry
- Identify with cisgender female expression
- Ability to meet via Zoom, phone or computer
- Current San Jose State University student
- Must be 18 or older

You will...

- be asked to meet for a 1 hour interview
- be compensated for your time via \$15 gift card

Next Steps: Complete demographic survey!

Use link or scan QR code: bit.ly/ma-research2020



Scan Me



*This study has been approved by the San Jose State University Institutional Review Board (IRB #20250)
Graduate Student Researcher: Briettney Curtner, briettney.curtner@sjsu.edu*

Appendix C: Consent Form

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Misogynoir - Undergraduate Experiences by Black Females

NAME OF THE RESEARCHER: Briettney Curtner, San Jose State Graduate Student
Thesis Supervisor: Professor Jason A. Laker, Ph.D, Department of Counselor Education

PURPOSE

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the impact of racism and sexism on the Black or African American female undergraduate student. Participants will be interviewed to better understand the lived experiences of this intersection of identity, race and gender, while in pursuit of a bachelor's degree.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview lasting approximately one (1) hour. The interview will occur via Zoom at a mutually agreed upon time during 2020 – 2021 academic year. The audio of the interview will be recorded and will be transcribed. Following, you will be sent a summarized thematic analysis via email and asked to verify.

POTENTIAL RISKS

The potential risks associated with this study should be minimal. You may feel discomfort due to uncomfortable emotions while describing previous experiences involving racism and/or sexism.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Although it is not expected that you will receive any direct benefits from this study, there may be indirect benefits through contribution to the existing literature on this topic, and possibly gaining insight on previous lived experiences by reflecting upon them during the interview.

COMPENSATION

You will receive an Amazon gift card of \$15 via email. This is a token of appreciation for your time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The results of the study will be published. Your social identity (race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) may be described in the study, however, your name will be changed to a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Participants will not be identified as SJSU students. The name of the university will be changed to a pseudonym, and it will be described as a comprehensive public university in the West. Since I am a mandated reporter, I am required to report information that is disclosed about harm to self, harm to others, or if someone may harm you, or if a child or elder has been or could be harmed.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study, please contact Student Investigator Brietttny Curtner, brietttny.curtner@sjsu.edu or Faculty Advisor Dr. Jason Laker, jason.laker@sjsu.edu
- Complaints about the research may be presented to Department Chair Dr. Dolores Mena, dolores.mena@sjsu.edu
- For questions about participants' rights or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San Jose State University, at 408-924-2479.

SIGNATURES

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant Signature

Participant's Name (printed)

Participant's Signature

Date


Researcher Statement

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the participant understands his/her rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures of the research and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Appendix D: Demographics Survey



Message from Graduate Student Researcher, Briettmy Curtner: Thank you for your interest in participating in this study, *Misogynoir - Undergraduate Experiences by Black Female*, Please complete this demographic survey which will determine your eligibility to participate.

First & Last Name:

Email Address:

→

What is your racial or ethnic identity? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Black
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ White
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Two or More Ethnicities
- ☐ Other:

What is your current age?

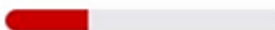
- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18
- ☐ 19
- ☐ 20
- ☐ 21
- ☐ 22 or older

To which gender identity do you most identity?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other:

To which sexual orientation do you must identify?

- ☐ Heterosexual or straight
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other:



SJSU SAN JOSÉ STATE
UNIVERSITY

I am a...

- ☐ First-year student
- ☐ Second-year student / Sophomore
- ☐ Third-year student / Junior
- ☐ Fourth-year student / Senior
- ☐ Fifth year student or longer

What is your current major?

If applicable, what is your current minor?





All set! Briettmy will deem eligibility and reach out to the email listed with more information, including the consent form via DocuSign.

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Pre-Interview:

1. Follow up via email about eligibility for study, including instructions on how to complete consent form via DocuSign, and confirm a mutually conveniently day/time to meet for an interview.

Introduction:

First, I appreciate your participation. Yes, I am doing this study to complete my thesis, however, the topic was chosen for multiple reasons. The Black and African American female voice is present in literature, but the male voice is louder. I am excited that those who choose to participate will help grow the existing literature. Further, I am interested in this topic because I also live within a minority – I am multiracial, Filipino, White, and Black, but I was not raised with an awareness of my Black identity until I discovered my truth. I am not here to instill any judgement, but to only better understand how racism and sexism impacts Black female college students. For the next hour or so, I hope to be guided by you as we reflect upon your college experience and lived experiences with racism and sexism. As mentioned in the consent form, your identity will remain confidential as I will be using pseudonyms and only the audio of our interview will be recorded. Before we begin, I want to remind you there are no wrong answers or trick questions and feel free to take your time before answering. You may choose to skip a question, come back to it, or opt out of this study at any time.

Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?

Interview Questions: Part 1

1. You self-identified as (reference race and gender demographic survey responses), how would you describe what it is like to be this identity?
2. If you could return to yourself in your senior year of high school, what advice would you share?
3. When reflecting on your college experience, from the moment you chose SJSU to now, have your expectations been met?
4. What challenges, if any, have you faced while at SJSU that relate to your racial and gender identity?

Part 2: We are more than halfway through! Soon, I will share my screen to display a chart.

1. There is a known concept of being a Strong Black Woman or Strong Independent Woman. I would like you to think of someone who meets the description, what are their characteristics?

Display Figure 5

1. Review, "Here are the proposed characteristics of being a Strong Black Woman"
 - a. Agree? Disagree?
 - b. Is there anything missing?
2. Review, "Here are the proposed conflicts of being a Strong Black Woman"
 - a. Agree? Disagree?
 - b. Is there anything missing?

Closing:

Those were all my questions! Thank you so much for sharing your lived experiences with me, I truly am grateful of the time we had together. As promised, you will be compensated with a \$15 Amazon gift card that will be sent to the email you provided on the consent form. Next, I will be reviewing our transcript for quotes and themes that stood out during our time. If I have any additional questions, may I reach out?

Before we depart, did you have any questions?

Appendix F: Member Checking Form

Below you will find sections of the interview transcript and the respective themes and interpretations, I believe, that were salient during those moments. Please review, answer the questions, and return to me. *If preferred, answers to the questions may be written in as your email response.*

Transcription	Themes / Interpretations
1.	
2.	
3.	

Questions:

1. Do you agree with the themes and interpretations? If not, which ones and why not?
2. Are there any points you would like to clarify from the above transcriptions?